

**IRONWOOD FOREST NATIONAL MONUMENT (IFNM)
RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN (RMP) AND
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT (EIS)
PUBLIC MEETING SUMMARY**

MEETING DATE: Wednesday, September 15, 2004

MEETING LOCATION: Parks and Recreation Building
Tucson, Arizona

PURPOSE: **Public Informational Meeting**
Wilderness Characteristics
Universal Access

Introduction

Larry Shults, BLM Planning Team Leader, opened the meeting with a welcome. Approximately 26 people attended the meeting, including five BLM representatives and 21 citizens. Groups represented included the Sky Island Alliance, Bighorn Sheep Society, Wilderness Coalition, Sierra Club, Tucson Electric Power, Resource Advisory Council (RAC), and the Arizona Game and Fish Department, among other organizations and private citizens.

Wilderness Coalition Presentation

Jason Williams, representative from the Wilderness Coalition (Coalition), spoke about why the Coalition is involved with the IFNM and explained the mission of the Coalition at the IFNM.

Jason first explained that the main purpose of the Coalition's involvement is to look at wilderness characteristics within the IFNM to ensure protection of those characteristics. Jason stated that roads and road networks are an important consideration for the Coalition when identifying wilderness characteristics. Jason informed the group that there are indicator species for wilderness characteristics such as overall scenery and ironwood vegetation. Jason stated that the Ragged Top, Waterman, Silverbell, and possibly the Roskrige mountain areas are candidates for wilderness characteristic protections. However, State lands within these areas create difficulty in designating wilderness characteristic protections. Jason noted that a good example of an area that needs wilderness characteristic protections is the Sawtooth Mountains because it has undergone some impacts even though this mountain area is remote and difficult to access.

Jason distributed a map to the group that showed some areas (Units) within the IFNM that the Coalition is considering for wilderness characteristic protections. Jason stated that within the units identified in the map, there are opportunities for hiking and experiences of solitude. The group raised a few questions, which are listed below.

Question: How is primitive recreation defined?

Answer: BLM stated that primitive recreation areas do not include any type of facility.

Question: Is the Coalition looking to parallel BLM's ROS designations?

Answer: Francisco Mendoza responded by describing BLM's ROS process and stated that BLM is developing ROS as part of the RMP/EIS.

Question: Why wouldn't BLM's RMP suffice for managing/protecting areas with wilderness characteristics?

Answer: Jason stated that Wilderness protections are permanent whereas BLM's management plans can be amended and expire.

Question: How would wildlife management work in concert with wilderness characteristic protections?

Answer: Each Unit would be considered individually so that issues can be worked through such as management activities associated with wildlife waters.

The group commented on the draft wilderness characteristic map that Jason handed out. First people expressed concern that some of the Units on the map encompass state, private lands, and some existing mining claim areas. Jason stated that he is aware of those designations and reminded the group that the map is a draft only. Second, people expressed concern about the Unit designation near Ragged Top because that area had been submitted previously to Congress for wilderness designation and was rejected.

Discussion was had among the group about recent litigation actions that prohibit BLM from designating areas as wilderness.

A representative from the Bighorn Sheep Society expressed concern with the wilderness characteristics concept and stated that it would be an obstacle to wildlife conservation.

It was mentioned that designations tend to draw more people (e.g. the bighorn sheep at Ragged Top). Larry explained that the alternatives development phase of the planning process is where the public can express its range of management options and would be a better format for this discussion on specific designations.

A representative from Tucson Electric Power (TEP) stated that BLM should consider looking at its management efforts on a regional scale so that borderland/homeland security issues can be incorporated. TEP also stressed that it would like to retain its access to existing facilities within the IFNM.

Larry introduced Ken Mahoney from the State Office who explained BLM's current issues and policies regarding wilderness and wilderness designations. Some questions were asked of Ken, which are as follows:

Question: Is BLM managing for the 1964 Wilderness Act?

Answer: Ken stated that BLM is not managing for the Act.

Question: Does the State Office feel that additional means are necessary in addition to the Proclamation?

Answer: Ken stated that BLM's goal is to keep the IFNM in its natural state and the RMP being developed is key.

Universal Access (Bob Hernbrode, Wildlife Biologist)

Bob began his presentation by asking the group to think about how, when, and why each person got its start for caring for the environment and wildlife. Bob emphasized that every person should have the ability to get the same start if desired and universal access serves to accommodate such desires.

Bob discussed various disabilities that range from temporary to permanent and gave examples of people being elderly to people who need to recover from accidents. Some universal access developments that were discussed include hard surfaces of trails (not paving) and interpretive centers. The Saguaro Nation Park East was brought up as a good example of how to accommodate elderly persons on trails.